

Comments on ADB's Draft Translation Framework

TO: disclosure@adb.org

FROM: Hemantha Withanage
Executive Director

Ronald Masayda
Campaign and Advocacy Coordinator

NGO Forum on ADB

DATE : 30 July 2006

Thanks for sending us a copy of the new ADB Translation Framework. While we welcome the Bank's Translation Framework, we would like to raise the following points:

- The draft framework has mentioned repeatedly the budgetary constraints for translating the ADB documents. However, we believe as a publicly-funded institution, ADB should endeavor to provide every member-nation and its citizenry equitable access to comprehensive, comprehensible, reliable and accurate information vis-à-vis its various interventions. If, indeed, it is serious and sincere in communicating meaningfully with affected communities and concerned stakeholders, then it must devote all the necessary resources to translate pertinent documents in their national languages. Thus, the framework should include a provision increasing the budget appropriation for translation undertakings.
- Translation should not only focus on "awareness-raising" documents. It is imperative that it encompass all Bank policies (i.e. safeguard, sectoral and accountability) as well as pertinent /crucial documents relevant to the project cycle (i.e. feasibility studies, operational manual and project information but not limited to these). This would enable communities and stakeholders to have a better understanding and appreciation of issues/concerns arising from ADB-funded projects. In view of this, the framework should clearly state the inclusion of the aforementioned and other needed documents in its translation coverage.
- A provision calling for ADB to consult with Civil Society Organizations, apart from concerned Governments, in identifying other languages relative to document translation (especially in cases involving Indigenous Peoples) is needed. This would enable external stakeholders to monitor the projects/programs better.
- Whereas the framework specifies that documents are "publicly available", particularly on the ADB website, then it should be made available in the national languages of member countries and not only in English. Otherwise, it runs counter to its own "public availability" provision.
- The statement: "ADB encourages borrowers and sponsors to play a key role in translation", is rather vague because it fails to list down documents which borrowers and

sponsors are required to translate. Thus, the Bank should set a minimum list of documents that these borrowers/sponsors should translate.

- The framework should establish a mechanism for the people to request or demand any project-related document when they feel it is necessary for people to be better informed.
- Lastly but most importantly, the framework should clarify that even though it is not an operational policy, it is still bound by a compliance review under the Bank's accountability mechanism. Since this framework comes into effect under the Public Communication Policy, we believe that it should be subjected to the accountability mechanism.

Therefore, we request Asian Development Bank to consider above comments made for the public interest.

Thank you.

Yours truly,

Hemantha Withanage
Executive Director

Ronald Masayda
Campaign and Advocacy Coordinator

The views expressed in this paper are the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), or its Board of Directors or the governments they represent. ADB makes no representation concerning and does not guarantee the source, originality, accuracy, completeness or reliability of any statement, information, data, finding, interpretation, advice, opinion, or view presented.